Cerion from the Eiden Site, Lorain County, Ohio

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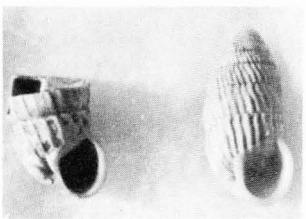
An unusual land snail found in the A. A. Bungart collection from the Eiden site, Lorain County, Ohio, probably represents a Late Woodland trade item from the Florida Keys. This fragmentary snail shell (Fig. 1) was found during analysis of the molluscan remains from the Eiden site.

McKenzie and Blank (1972) believe that the major occupation at the Eiden site occurred between A.D. 1300 and 1450. The occurrence of numerous marine shell artifacts in this Late Woodland component — *Marginella* beads, conch disc and columella beads, and perforated conch shell pendants (?)—suggests that the *Cerion* shell is part of the Late Woodland assemblage. Minor Early Woodland and Late Prehistoric components also occur at the site, however.

Dr. R. Tucker Abbott, Delaware Museum of Natural History, has kindly examined the Eiden *Cerion* specimen and has identified it as "a ribbed form of the pulmonate land snail, *Cerion incanum* Binney" (Abbott, personal communication, March 1, 1972). This group of land snails is highly variable, but the Eiden shell appears to represent the *saccharimeta* form of *C. incanum* illustrated by Pilsbry (1946: 163, fig. 77e, f) from Sugarloaf Key. Detailed distributional data are not available, but Bales (cited in Pilsbry 1946: 164) reports a ribbed form of *C. incanum* from Cudjoe Key, and similar specimens might be expected elsewhere. In any case, the genus *Cerion* is highly restricted in its range, being known only from the Bahamas, the Florida Keys, the Greater Antilles from Cuba to the Virgin Islands, and southward to the Cayman Islands and Curagao.

This anomalous *Cerion* occurrence on an archeological site in northern Ohio is best explained as a result of aboriginal trade. It is the first occurrence known from the central United States, though Dr. Abbott reports *Cerion* from archeological sites in the Southwest. *Cerion* shells are occasionally found on the Texas coast, presumably washed across the Gulf of Mexico by storms. The possibility that the Eiden specimen was accidentally mixed with the molluscan remains from the site seems to be precluded by the apparent care with which Bungart excavated and labelled his material. Furthermore, sediment preserved on the interior of the body whorl and a red-orange ochre-like oxidation deposit on the shell are identically matched by deposits associated with fresh-water molluscan shells from the Eiden site.

It is recognized that surface finds of many types of marine molluscs—notably oysters, quahogs, and pectens — are too often ascribed to Indian trading when in fact they are more probably the result of modern clambakes, agricultural "liming," or tourism. "Drilled" pecten or scallop shells, for example, are frequently accepted as *bona fide* artifacts when the holes are nothing more than parasitic gastropod borings. One alleged aboriginal "shell heap" in eastern Ohio turned out to be nothing more than a tilled field that had recently been "sweetened" with oyster shell. Nevertheless, it is not considered likely that the *Cerion* shell was transported to Ohio by some Floridian tourist and peripatetic shell collector, to be discarded on the Eiden site. The relatively small size of the shell, its fragmentary condition, and the conformability in associated matrix and degree of weathering between it and the native molluscan sample suggest that this *Cerion* shell is a legitimate part of the Late Woodland component at Eiden.



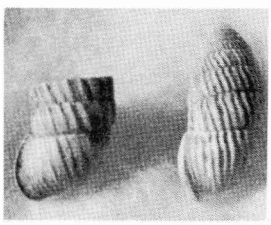


Fig. 1 (Murphy) Obverse and reverse views of (left) Cerion incanum from general midden at Eiden site, (fragmentary specimen), and (right) Cerion of C. uva (type species of Cerion) from island of Curagao, Dutch West Indies (complete specimen), furnished by Dr. R. Tucker Abbott.